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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Security Council
Sixty-seventh year

Identical letters dated 14 December 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, dated 13 December 2012, on the 22nd round of the Geneva International Discussions (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex issued as a document of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34.

(*Signed*) Alexander **Lomaia**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the identical letters dated 14 December 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia regarding the 22nd round of the Geneva International Discussions

The 22nd round of the Geneva International Discussions was held on 12 December 2012. The participants in the Geneva Discussions took part in an individual capacity in the two working groups, one focusing on security and stability in Georgia's occupied Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, and the other on issues related to the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees to the places of their original residence. The discussions were co-chaired by representatives of the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and attended by the participants from Georgia, the Russian Federation and the United States. The Head of the Provisional Administration of the former South Ossetian Autonomous District and the Chairman of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, as well as representatives of the occupied regimes from Tskhinvali and Sokhumi, also took part in the 22nd round of the Geneva Discussions.

The participants from Georgia stressed the commitment of the new negotiating team formed after the parliamentary elections to the continuity of the Geneva International Discussions as the key format for the implementation of the 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement.

On 11 December, an information session on humanitarian needs assessment methodologies was held. Invited experts acquainted the participants with international best practices and methodologies for assessing the needs of affected populations across the dividing lines and stressed the importance of guaranteeing humanitarian access to such areas.

In the framework of Working Group I of the Discussions, the participants addressed the issue of non-use of force. Georgia once again called on the Russian Federation to fulfil its outstanding obligation and to reciprocate Georgia's unilateral pledge not to use force. The expert group, created during the previous meeting, continued to work on a draft statement by the participants in the Geneva International Discussions on the non-use of force that had been tabled by the co-Chairs, and reviewed and incorporated amendments and changes proposed by the participants. The differences of opinion persist in a number of areas. However, Georgia particularly welcomes the continued engagement of the Russian participants in the drafting process as a step in the right direction towards a reciprocal non-use-of-force pledge by the Russian Federation. The drafting process will continue during the 23rd round of the Geneva International Discussions.

In Working Group I, the participants also discussed the security situation on the ground. Georgia raised concern over the continued obstruction of the Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism and stressed the importance of its timely resumption in its full composition. They also highlighted the worrying trend of the increasing number of detentions for alleged violations of the crossing regulations, as well as additional impediments to the freedom of movement,

including for the most vulnerable individuals, seeking urgent medical assistance. In three such cases, patients died en route after being refused permission to cross.

Aiming to address these concerning developments in a durable manner, the co-Chairs presented a catalogue of best practices on freedom of movement, as implemented at various stages under the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms. The Georgian participants welcomed this proposal. It was agreed that various aspects of freedom of movement would be discussed in detail during the upcoming rounds of the Geneva Discussions, with the aim of creating an agreed practical framework for the freedom of movement.

The discussions in Working Group II started on a positive note. The Georgian participants reconfirmed their commitment to a humanitarian, people-centred approach. In the context of constructive engagement, several concrete projects were announced, including resumption of the gas supply to Akhalgori district. Regarding missing persons, the participants from Georgia referred to the outcome of a recent Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism meeting in Ergneti and strongly reaffirmed their dedication to resolve outstanding matters under the non-politicized, humanitarian leadership of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The co-Chairs, drawing on the information session held during the previous round, called upon the participants to reflect on the creation of a special body that would address the outstanding cases of missing persons. The Georgian participants noted this initiative with interest and agreed to provide feedback during upcoming meetings.

To the profound disappointment of the Georgian participants, the representatives of the Tskhinvali and Sokhumi occupation regimes, supported by the representatives from the Russian Federation, stopped discussion of pragmatic proposals, linking further engagement to their politically motivated agenda for the change of the format of the Geneva Discussions. Through this action, the occupation regimes demonstrated that, for them, political considerations related to status take priority over the humanitarian needs of the local population.

Similarly, participants from the regimes in Sokhumi and Tskhinvali continued to block the discussion on the core mandate of Working Group II related to the return of internally displaced persons and refugees. The concrete proposals of the co-Chairs on facilitating the humanitarian access of certain categories of residents to cemeteries, cultural and religious sites were left unanswered.

The representatives of the occupation regimes of Sokhumi and Tskhinvali, as well as Moscow, continued their concerted effort to achieve a change in the format of the Geneva Discussions. The co-Chairs stressed the vital importance of keeping the agreed format of the Geneva Discussions intact. The co-Chairs called for constructive engagement on issues, based on the mandate, that are reflected in the agenda of the two Working Groups. They also pointed out that humanitarian and human rights needs must be separated from the political issues.

Georgia thanks the co-Chairs for their efforts in steering the 22nd round of discussions and expresses its readiness to cooperate with them in a traditionally constructive spirit in preparing the next round of the discussions. Georgia expresses hope that all participants will re-engage positively in discussions to improve the security situation and address the humanitarian needs of the local population.

The 23rd round of the Geneva International Discussions will be held on 27 March 2013.